



# The Oxford Book of American Poetry

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Here is the eagerly awaited new edition of *The Oxford Book of American Poetry* brought completely up to date and dramatically expanded by poet David Lehman. It is a rich, capacious volume, featuring the work of more than 200 poets-almost three times as many as the 1976 edition. With a succinct and often witty head note introducing each author, it is certain to become the definitive anthology of American poetry for our time.

Lehman has gathered together all the works one would expect to find in a landmark collection of American poetry, from Whitman's *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry* to Stevens's *The Idea of Order at Key West*, and from Eliot's *The Waste Land* to Ashbery's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*. But equally important, the editor has significantly expanded the range of the anthology. The book includes not only writers born since the previous edition, but also many fine poets overlooked in earlier editions or little known in the past but highly deserving of attention. The anthology confers legitimacy on the Objectivist poets; the so-called Proletariat poets of the 1930s; famous poets who fell into neglect or were the victims of critical backlash (Edna St. Vincent Millay); poets whose true worth has only become clear with the passing of time (Weldon Kees). Among poets missing from Richard Ellmann's 1976 volume but published here are W. H. Auden, Charles Bukowski, Donald Justice, Carolyn Kizer, Kenneth Koch, Stanley Kunitz, Emma Lazarus, Mina Loy, Howard Moss, Lorine Niedecker, George Oppen, James Schuyler, Elinor Wylie, and Louis Zukosky. Many more women are represented: outstanding poets such as Josephine Jacobsen, Josephine Miles, May Swenson. Numerous African-American poets receive their due, and unexpected figures such as the musicians Bob Dylan, Patti Smith and Robert Johnson have a place in this important work.

This stunning collection redefines the great canon of American poetry from its origins in the 17th century right up to the present. It is a must-have anthology for anyone interested in American literature and a book that is sure to be consulted, debated, and treasured for years to come.

## The Oxford Book of American Poetry Details

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# From Reader Review The Oxford Book of American Poetry for online ebook

## Hannah Johnson says

My personal Bible. Enough said.

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## Adrienne says

When an anthology is over 1,000 pages and almost 800 of those are only the 20th century, I wonder what happened to the rest of America's literary tradition. Most of the selections here are great and deserve to be included, but a lot has been left out (like most of the 1800s) and some included poets' works could be reduced. For example, it is a bit stunning, as Dana Gioia has pointed out, that Longfellow is/was the most popular American poet of all time, and he only gets a few pages in anthologies. But poets like to separate their "serious" poetry from popular poetry. Just because a movement of poetry is formulaic and predictable doesn't mean it should be ignored.

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## Joe Starnes says

This collection is large but still missing many significant southern poets, in particular, James Dickey (an omission that is downright inexcusable), as well as Sidney Lanier, Byron Herbert Reece, Miller Williams, David Bottoms, Dave Smith, Wyatt Prunty, and Greg Williamson.

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## Bill Gray says

Exactly what it says it is. It's fairly comprehensive, and arranged well (chronologically). The selections are not restricted to the obvious ones, but the obvious ones are there. Isn't it time you re-visited "Stopping By Woods On a Snowy Evening"? Just kidding, I'm sure you reached your saturation point with that one in sixth grade. But check out "Another Reason I Don't Keep a Gun in the House" by Billy Collins or "The Wild Geese" by Mary Oliver.

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## Melody says

This new edition is considerably larger than the previous ones, and I've been working on it for a month or so. I discovered some new poets, some old friends, and faithfully slogged through some poems I remembered hating. I was right about them, but one never knows. Poetry, I've found, is very fluid, and poems resonate differently for me through the years. There's no way I feel adequate to review a book on this scale, a book of this scope, except to say that if you like poetry it's certainly worth perusing. If you hate poetry, read the

quote by William Matthews below, and be free.

The poems new to me with which I fell in love:

Amaze by Adelaide Crapsey

The House Was Quiet And The World Was Calm by Wallace Stevens

Before Disaster by Yvor Winters

Those Winter Sundays by Robert Hayden

The Lost Children by Randall Jarrell

Why Regret by Galway Kinnell

The Return by Philip Levine

At 65 by Richard Howard

Forty Something by Robert Hass

Celestial Music and

Vespers by Louise Gluck

Otherwise by Jane Kenyon

Form by Heather McHugh

And last, this gem from the blurb about William Matthews

"He once observed that most published poems fall into one of four thematic categories: '1. I went out in the woods today and it made me feel, you know, sort of religious. 2. We're not getting any younger. 3. It sure is cold and lonely (a) without you, honey, or (b) with you, honey. 4) Sadness seems but the other side of the coin of happiness, and vice versa, and in any case the coin is too soon spent and on we know not what.'"

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### **Mike The Pirate says**

A great book, a wonderful anthology, but unfortunately there is one problem with it as a work. It is the "Oxford" the British book of American Poetry, meaning that these are the selections of another country anthologizing American poetry. There are many noticeable absences. The poetry selections are mainly from East Coast authors and it does not feature as wide a range of multicultural authors as have become well known in America.

Still a good reference to have on one's shelves.

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### **Victoria says**

Confession 1 - I didn't read this 1085-page book cover to cover. Confession 2 - I just don't get poetry. I read Whitman and Dickinson (for my book club). They did nothing for me. I feel anti-american saying so. I jumped around and tried other poems as well. The poems Peter suggested (by Russell Edson) are the only ones I liked. But, I admit, I didn't read everything. I guess later in the year I'll try poetry again. If you have any advice, send my way.

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### **Robert Palmer says**

The principal problem with this tome is that its emphasis is on modern poetry, even though it purports to be a

comprehensive volume of American poetry. Of its 1085 pages of poetry, almost all of it is devoted to what passed for poetry in the twentieth century. This was accomplished not only by reducing the number of poets from earlier centuries, but also the number of pages devoted to each.

Just five poets represent the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. America's Golden Age of poetry, the nineteenth century, is relegated to fewer than 200 pages. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a prolific poet who was once considered to be America's greatest poet, has barely ten pages. In contrast, twentieth century "poets," such as Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams, each get more than twice as much space.

But then, what can one expect of an editor whose bias is not hidden? David Lehman states in his introduction, "... the need to replace the retrospective anthologies of the past is as constant as the need to render classic works in new translations with up-to-date idioms." Did you get that? He advocates editing classic works! What hubris!

Save your money -- don't buy this book, and don't waste your time reading beyond the first 200 pages. If, like me, you prefer poetry that speaks to the soul, poetry that is accessible to the masses rather than to just a handful of self-appointed "experts" in poetry, then look for an anthology assembled for ordinary people. One such volume is *The Best Love Poems of the American People*.

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### **Steven says**

I am having a good time just exploring (2009)

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### **Ashley (JaffaCaffa) says**

I am no expert on poetry, I have only read a handful which is why I decided to read this and expand my horizons! I have always been interested in poetry, but never took the time to appreciate it. Here's my ratings of the poems I read, more for future reference than anything, so I can look back and see which poets were my favourites and why. Feel free to read the ones I rated highly, or suggest other poems you think I may like!

W. H. Auden:

"As I Walked Out One Evening" ★★★

Louise Glück:

"Celestial Music" ★★

Robert Frost:

"Provide, Provide" ★★

"The Oven Bird" ★★★

"The Road Not Taken" ★ Generic.

"Fire and Ice" ★★★★★

"Design" ★★

Jane Kenyon:

"Otherwise" ★★★★★

Heather McHugh:

"What He Thought" ★★★★★ *Wow this hit me hard.*

Sharon Olds:

"The One Girl at the Boys Party" ★★★

"The Race" ★★

Ron Padgett:

"Voice" ★★★★★

Mary Oliver:

"Some Questions You Might Ask" ★★

Katha Pollitt:

"Failure" ★★★

"Mind-Body Problem" ★★★

Weldon Kees:

"For My Daughter" ★★★★★ *Oh how I have struggled with these thoughts as I self-reflect. Worrying that my wants wouldn't be the best for my daughter, physically and mentally, as well as myself.*

William Stafford:

"Traveling Through the Dark" ★

"Ask Me" ★★★

Wallace Stevens:

"Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock" ★★★

"The Death of a Solider" ★★★ *This leads to the question, should we get recognition for the things we have done when we die? I'm not sure what the correct answer is supposed to be myself.*

Michael Palmer:

"A man undergoes pain sitting at a piano" ★★★★★

E. E. Cummings:

"anyone lived in a pretty how town" ★★

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## Daudi Mlengela says

For anyone who want to read and teach poetry, I recommend this book. The book gives poetic details starting from poets to their poem.

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